

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 210812Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1352

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, SP

SUBJ: CARDINAL'S RESPONSE TO SUSPENSION OF MADRID CHRISTIAN
ASSEMBLY

REF: MADRID 1848

SUMMARY: MADRID CARDINAL RESPONDED TO WEEKEND PROHIBITION OF
CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY BY MODERATE HOMILY CONDEMNING GOVT FOR
ITS ACTION, BUT ALSO REPRIMANDING ACTIVIST PRIESTS WHO REFUSED
TO SAY MASS. END SUMMARY

1. ON MARCH 19 HOLY DAY, CARDINAL TARANCON HAD READ AT ALL
MASSES IN MADRID ARCHDIOCESE A HOMILY DEALING WITH GOVT'S
PROHIBITION OF "FIRST CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY" TO HAVE BEEN HELD
IN PAPULOUS MADRID WORKING CLASS DISTRICT THIS MONTH (REFTEL).

2. CARDINAL'S HOMILY TOOK CIVIL AUTHORITIES TO TASK FOR
THEIR "UNJUST" ACTION, REJECTING GOVT'S JUDGMENT THAT ASEMBLY
HAD ULTERIOR OBJECTIVES BEYOND CHURCH'S EVANGELIZING MISSION.
HE STATED THAT CHURCH HAD NOT INVENTED CURRENT CONFLICTS AND
DID NOT INTEND TO INFLAME THEM NOR TO CREATE NEW DIFFICULTIES
FOR GOVT, BUT CHURCH FELT IT HAS OBLIGATION TO LISTEN TO THOSE
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WHO SUFFER TO "ILLUMINATE THEM ALWAYS WITH LIGHT OF GOSPEL."

3. CARDINAL BALANCED ATTACK ON GOVT BY ALSO STRONGLY REPRIMANDING PARISH PRIESTS WHO HAD PROTESTED BAN BY REFUSING TO SAY MASS LAST SUNDAY IN 24 CHURCHES. HE DENIED ANYONE HAD RIGHT TO DEPRIVE FAITHFUL OF THEIR SACRED RIGHT TO HEAR HOLY MASS REGARDLESS OF ISSUE. HOMILY CONCLUDED WITH EXPRESSION OF HOPE THAT FORMULA COULD BE FOUND FOR ASSEMBLY TO BE HELD.

4. COMMENT: TARACCON'S HOMILY IS CONSIDERED RATHER MILD UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES BY OPPOSITION AND PROGRESSIVE CLERGY. ITS EQUAL CONDEMNATION OF GOVT AND OF PRIESTS WHO REFUSED TO SAY MASS ANGERED NUMBER OF CLERGY. THERE IS SOME DISILLUSIONMENT BY PRIESTS WITH TARANCON'S LEADERSHIP AND HANDLING OF THE MATTER, WHERE A MUCH STRONGER PROTEST ACTION, INCLUDING PERHAPS A SPECIAL CONVOCATION OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE HAD BEEN EXPECTED. SOME CHURCH SOURCES SURPRISED THAT NOTHING HAS BEEN HEARD FROM NUNCIATURE OVER ISSUE, PARTICULARLY SINCE VALLECAS PROHIBITION IS APPARENTLY IN CONFLICT WITH CHURCH'S PREROGATIVES UNDER CONCORDAT.

5. EPISODE HAS NOT YET ENDED, HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO ONE ACTIVIST PRIEST, MANY IF NOT MOST, OF CLERGY WHO WOULD HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN ABORTED ASSEMBLY, ARE GOING TO ATTEMPT TO HOLD ASSEMBLY AGAIN THIS SATURDAY, MARCH 22-23, DESPITE GOVT'S PROHIBITION AND REGARDLESS OF WHETHER OR NOT CARDINAL TARANCON PARTICIPATES OR TAKES A MORE FORCEFUL STAND.

6. THIS IS GENERALLY REGARDED AS MOST SERIOUS CHURCH/STATE ISSUE TO HAVE ARISEN IN SPAIN SINCE BILBAO BISHOP ANOVEROS EPISODE ONE YEAR AGO. HOWEVER, ISSUE DOES NOT YET APPEAR TO HAVE SAME GRAVITY OF ANOVEROS CASE, SINCE NEITHER CARDINAL TARANCON, HIERARCHY AS A WHOLE, NOR PAPAL NUNCIO, UNLIKE IN ANOVEROS CASE, HAVE SOUGHT OPEN PUBLIC CONFRONTATION WITH GOVT OVER ISSUE (EXCEPT FOR TARANCON'S HOMILY). IF, AS RUMORED, PRIESTS AND LAITY DEFY BAN ON ASSEMBLY THIS COMING WEEKEND, OR IF GOVT ITSELF OVERREACTS TO TARANCON'S HOMILY, NEW STRAINS COULD RESULT.
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